

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SB 5038

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### As Passed House - Amended:

April 13, 2009

**Title:** An act relating to making technical corrections to gender-based terms.

**Brief Description:** Making technical corrections to gender-based terms.

**Sponsors:** Senators Kohl-Welles, King, Keiser, Franklin and Pridemore; by request of Statute Law Committee.

### Brief History:

#### Committee Activity:

Judiciary: 3/18/09, 3/19/09 [DP].

#### Floor Activity

Passed House: 4/13/09, 77-20.

### Brief Summary of Bill (As Amended by House)

- Changes gender-specific terms to gender-neutral terms in several titles of the Revised Code of Washington.

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## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Pedersen, Chair; Goodman, Vice Chair; Rodne, Ranking Minority Member; Flannigan, Kelley, Kirby, Ormsby, Roberts and Warnick.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Shea, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ross.

**Staff:** Trudes Tango (786-7384)

### Background:

Since 1983 state law has required that all statutes be written in gender-neutral terms, unless a specification of gender is intended. In 2007 the Legislature passed Engrossed Senate Bill

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5063, an act relating to removing gender references. The legislation changed gender-specific terms to gender-neutral terms in several chapters of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW). The Legislature directed the Code Reviser, in consultation with the Statute Law Committee, to develop and implement a plan to correct gender-specific references in the entire RCW. The Code Reviser must make annual legislative recommendations to make the RCW completely gender-neutral by June 30, 2015.

**Summary of Amended Bill:**

Gender-specific terms and references are made gender-neutral in several titles of the RCW. For example, references to "man" or "men" are changed to "person" or "persons," "councilman" is changed to "councilmember," and "chairman" is changed to "chair."

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date of Amended Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) The language in many sections of the code is out of date. There are over 3,000 sections in the RCW that have gender-specific references. When the Legislature first asked the Code Reviser's Office to make changes to the statutes, it was determined that it would cost much less if the changes were done incrementally in such a way so as to not require the printing of extra volumes of the session laws. Making all the changes to the terms will take about six years.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor; and Kyle Thiessen, Statute Law Committee.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.